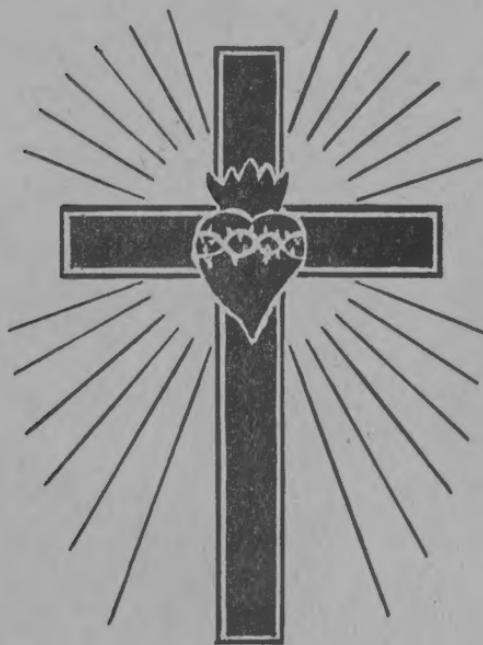


IN THIS SIGN



THEY CONQUERED

1844

1944

In This Sign They Conquered

Commemorating the Centenary of
the Grey Nuns of St. Boniface

by

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St. Peter's Press, Muenster, Sask.

Nihil Obstat.

Antoine d'Eschambault, ptre
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur.

Georges Cabana, Archevêque Coadjuteur
de Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.

May 13, 1944.

We wish to declare, in conformity with the decree of Pope Urban VIII and the definitions of other Popes, that statements made in this work are based solely upon human authority and not meant to anticipate the decisions of the Church.—The Author.



VENERABLE MOTHER D'YOUVILLE
Foundress of the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns)

IN THIS SIGN THEY CONQUERED

Conquering Spirit

There is being celebrated in the month of June, this year, 1944, the one hundredth anniversary of the coming to Saint Boniface of the Grey Nuns. But that is not all that is being celebrated. There is being celebrated the triumph of an ideal for which the Catholic Church stands—the ideal of heroic love. The story of the Grey Nuns in the Canadian West is a story that thrills and inspires. It is a story that forms one of the most beautiful chapters in the history of the Canadian Northwest. It is a story of heroic sacrifice and unselfish service. Woven into that story from beginning to end is the magnificent spirit of devotion and loyalty of the valiant daughters of a valiant Mother—the Venerable Servant of God, Marie-Marguerite d'Youville.

When a young girl enters the Grey Nuns' organization as a postulant, she begs "to be clothed in the Holy Habit of the Sisters of Charity of this Institute, to wear the livery of Jesus Christ and serve Him in the person of His poor." To serve Christ in the person of His poor! There we have the conquering spirit of the Grey Nuns. There we have the spirit of the big-hearted, generous, self-sacrificing Mother d'Youville who commanded: "**The Sisters will be ever ready to undertake all manner of good works, which may be placed before them by Divine Providence, and approved by superiors.**"

There was to be no exception to this rule. And there has been no exception. For over two hundred years the Grey Nuns have undertaken all manner of good works, and because they have done so, the spirit of the Mother lives today in the persons of over five thousand of her daughters laboring in scores of institutions scattered all over the continent of North America, as well as in foreign mission fields.

To serve God in the person of His poor! That was the conquering ideal that thrilled and captivated the noble soul of the illustrious heroine of Charity, Mother d'Youville. That was the ideal that inspired her to found her glorious Army of Love—the Grey Nuns. Born, October 15, 1701, near Montreal, her whole life was an unceasing martyrdom of soul and body. She was called upon, through trials and adversities patiently and lovingly

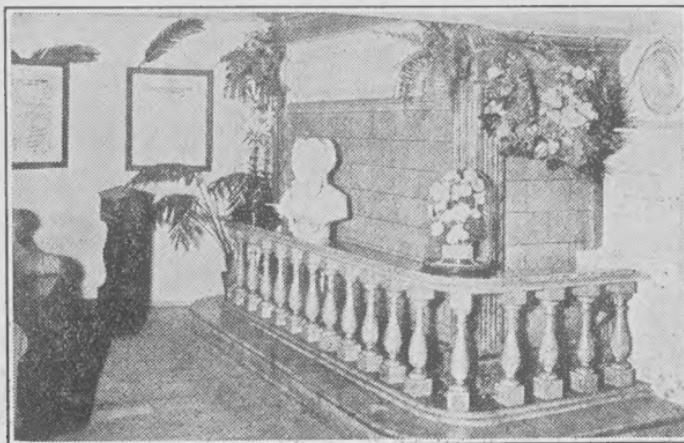


**REV. MOTHER E. GALLANT
Superior General**

borne, to follow Christ on the road that leads to Calvary and—to victory. She was possessed of a loving, tender, kind and sympathizing heart. She loved the poor and longed to help them.

Married to Francois Madeleine d'Youville in 1722, her wedded life of six years, due to circumstances beyond her control was an agonizing trial for her. But she was a daughter of the Cross. At the foot of the Cross she learned the lessons of humility, patience and charity. In addition to discharging the duties of widow and mother, paying the family debts and providing for her two sons who afterwards became priests, she found time and means to go to the relief of the friendless and forsaken members of Christ—all those in need of affectionate consideration. She found devoted and noble-hearted companions. They gathered together on the Vigil of all Saints, 1738, before a little statue of the Blessed Virgin and begged her to accept their promise to dedicate their lives to the service of God's poor. Thus was planted a lovely tree, a tree that has grown and developed and spread far and wide its beautiful branches laden with precious fruit.

The Venerable Foundress died on the evening of December 23, 1771, but her conquering spirit lived on. It lived in 1847 when eleven hundred emigrants were crowded together in the typhus sheds of Point St. Charles, Montreal, and Mother MacMullen appealed to her thirty-seven Sisters for volunteers to go amongst the stricken. There was no one of them who said, "No!" They all



TOMB OF THE VENERABLE FOUNDRESS

voluteered. All went and all went down with the dread disease except three. Seven of them died of it. This is but one of scores of examples that could be cited of daughters of Mother d'Youville who covered themselves with glory fighting under the snowy white oriflamme of the Cross. History establishes conclusively that the Grey Nuns learned the lessons of Mother d'Youville and learned them well.

The Call to the West

The time came when the conquering spirit of Mother d'Youville's glorious legion of mercy was to receive a supreme test. The test came in the fall of 1843. Then it was that there appeared at the Motherhouse of the Grey Nuns at Montreal an illustrious soldier of the Cross. He was Bishop Norbert Provencher, the first Bishop of the Northwest. He made a most fervent appeal. He asked of the Grey Nuns a great sacrifice. He wanted nuns to go with him to the Canadian Northwest. He asked for three of them —to teach school, to take care of the sick, to sew, spin, weave, cook and sing; one of them should know music, and at least one of them should be able to teach English.

In order to understand the greatness of the sacrifice asked of the Grey Nuns by the good and valiant Bishop we have to keep in mind the situation as it was at the time in the Canadian Northwest. The Red River settlement had been founded only about thirty-two years previously by Lord Selkirk. It was the scene of disorders, uprisings and bloodshed.

A permanent mission had been established by Father Norbert Provencher in the Red River settlement in 1818. At the time he held the title of vicar-general of Bishop Plessis for the Northwest. Four years later, in 1822, Father Provencher was consecrated titular bishop of Juliopolis and coadjutor to the Bishop of Quebec for the Canadian Northwest. He established his residence at St. Boniface. St. Boniface was at the time the threshold of an immense territory comprising 1,800,000 square miles. In 1843, there were in the Red River Settlement, about 2,800 Catholics, scattered over a wide territory.

The work Bishop Provencher was called upon to do was extremely difficult. Grasshoppers, floods and drought were destroying crops, sometimes several years in succession. The heart of the good bishop was moved by the sufferings of his people. But

his confidence in God never faltered. He felt that God would hear his prayers in His own good time and in His own way.

How difficult the task of Bishop Provencher was is evident from a statement made by Bishop Charles de Mazenod of Marseilles who in 1816 founded the great missionary congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. When in 1843 Bishop de Mazenod was asked for missionaries for the Red River settlement he exclaimed: "But, it is to send my sons to death!"

From the very beginning, Bishop Provencher realized the urgent need of nuns to help him in his apostolic work. In 1819, three years before his consecration as bishop, he wrote in his correspondence: "Already, if we had sisters for the education of girls, they would find something to do here. I do not think it inopportune to think of this."

The story of Bishop Provencher's search for nuns is a story of unfaltering perseverance. In 1822, he consulted with Bishop Plessis who had consecrated him. But both reached the same conclusion: namely, that the life in the Canadian Northwest was so hard, the privations and hardships so many and great, that help from any religious community of women was simply impossible to expect.

In 1838, the Ursulines of Three Rivers were so deeply moved by Bishop Provencher's account of the need of a Catholic school with nuns to teach in it that they offered to go to him. The Ursuline nuns are marvelous teachers, ever willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause of Catholic education. But they are cloistered and in 1838, and for many years afterwards it would have been simply next to impossible to live a cloistered life on the prairies.

Bishop Provencher appealed to the Bishop of Amiens and to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith at Lyons but without success. He appealed to the Sisters of the Cross in Kentucky, but they were too few in number. The Sisters of St. Joseph in Lyons were also unable to accept. Some Belgian nuns in Cincinnati promised to refer the matter to the Motherhouse in Namur and so it continued—one disappointment after another.

But God stood by His good servant, Bishop Provencher and was to hear his prayer. After so many times appealing in vain for nuns, someone told him, "Try the Grey Nuns; they never refuse." So to Montreal Bishop Provencher decided to go. When he left St. Boniface, June 19th, 1843, he was fully determined not

to return without nuns. He consulted with Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal. To him he eloquently explained the increasing anxieties which his dear children of the woods were causing him, and the necessity of finding nuns who would take charge of the teaching of the young, the care of the sick, the encouragement of industry, housekeeping, the making of cloth. Bishop Bourget at once reached the conclusion that it was to the Grey Nuns that an appeal should be made.

The appeal was made as we have already seen. The Reverend Mother General with her family of Grey Nuns at Montreal listened to the prelate with the greatest of interest. There were only thirty-eight members of the community at the time. They had never before founded a mission but they realized something of the hardships and privations they would be called upon to face in the West.

But the good Sisters of Charity remembered the lessons taught them by their Venerable Foundress. They remembered too that their



MOTHERHOUSE, MONTREAL
Chapel Entrance

beloved Mother d'Youville was a niece on her mother's side of the illustrious explorer of the Canadian west—Pierre Varennes de la Verendrye. Among the Grey Nuns there was the tradition that the Venerable Foundress used to send to the Indians of the then desolate west, clothes she had made with her own hands. And so it might have been that the nuns had a presentiment that some day they would follow their "uncle" to the land of his last sleep.

After careful deliberations, the decision was made. Instead of the three Grey Nuns that Bishop Provencher had asked for, he was to receive four. Those chosen were:

Sister Marie-Louise Valade, superior, age 35; Sister Marie-Marguerite Eulalie Lagrave, assistant superior, age 36; Sister Anastasie Gertrude Coutlee (St. Joseph), mistress of novices, age 34; Sister Hedwidge Lafrance, age 26.

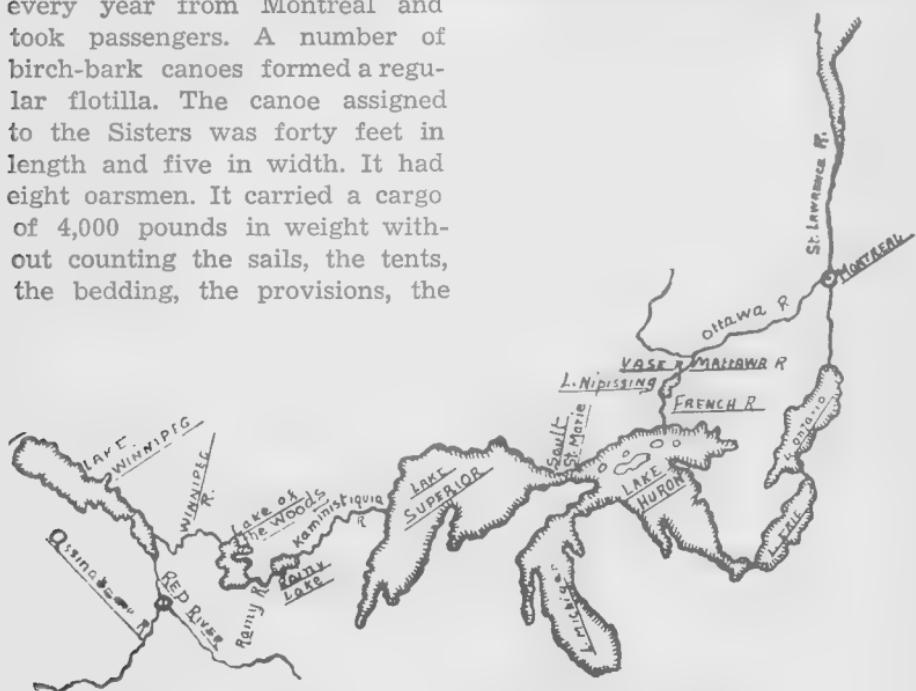
It was a momentous decision. It was a decision inspired simply and solely by the love of Christ and of the souls for which Christ died on the Cross. It is only the love of Christ and of souls that can cause a girl to leave behind her all that the world holds dear and enter the religious state—become a nun. Those four brave young ladies, those courageous daughters of a courageous Mother—Marie-Marguerite d'Youville—were heralds of the Cross. They wanted to help the successor of the Apostles, Bishop Provencher, in his glorious work of winning souls for Christ in the far off Canadian West. They wanted to share in the work of Christ for the salvation and sanctifying of the souls of men. They looked upon the Red River settlement as a glorious field in which to do a glorious work. So, on November 7th, 1843, they signed the document accepting the invitation to found a mission in the Red River settlement. Preparations were made to leave the following spring.

The Trip to the West

The four gallant Grey Nuns started out on their trip west, April 24th, 1844. It must have been a heart-rending experience for them to leave their Motherhouse. But they were nuns. They were brides of Christ. When they made their religious profession, they sacrificed their all without reserve on the altar of love. They had answered the call of Christ to come into a convent, and now Christ was calling them again, calling them to the great lone land, far from their beloved motherhouse where they had made

their novitiate and pronounced their vows. But if they loved their motherhouse with an intense love, they loved Christ still more. It is love, and love alone that can explain the courage and daring that animated those young daughters of Mother d'Youville and caused them to embark on one of the greatest adventures in history. Because they loved so much, and because for the sake of their love they so joyfully faced hardship and privation and danger, Christ loved those nuns too and bestowed His blessings upon them in torrents. The establishment of the Grey Nuns organization in the west must be regarded as one of the most successful undertakings of Canadian history. Today in the Canadian Northwest instead of one institution and four nuns, there are thirty-three institutions and five hundred and thirty-four Grey Nuns divided into three provinces—St. Boniface, St. Albert and Divine Providence.

The trip of those first four nuns was made in a canoe belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company. This Company sent up supplies every year from Montreal and took passengers. A number of birch-bark canoes formed a regular flotilla. The canoe assigned to the Sisters was forty feet in length and five in width. It had eight oarsmen. It carried a cargo of 4,000 pounds in weight without counting the sails, the tents, the bedding, the provisions, the



MAP OF ROUTE TO RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

kitchen utensils, and so on. The nuns made room for themselves as best they could among the boxes and bales. That canoe was to be their "cell" for fifty-nine days, the time it took them to make the trip of fourteen hundred miles.

The course was made by the Ottawa River, the Mattawa, Vase river, Lake Nipissing, French river, Lake Huron, Lake Superior, the Kaministiquia river, Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, the Winnipeg river, and several streams of lesser importance.

The trip meant the crossing of more than fifty dangerous rapids, the making of eighty portages. A portage meant that everyone had to get out and walk over land—through mud, across fallen trees and over hills—from one lake or river to another, or from one part of a river to the next navigable part. All the boats and their contents had to be carried. Then there were other hardships without number. Clouds of insects would swoop down upon the camping places. The nights were chilly, the ground was hard to sleep on. There were torrential downpours and winds that at times reached cyclonic fury. The noise of animals often kept the travellers awake at night. Then there was always danger from hostile tribes of Indians that already had fallen upon and slain many a "paleface."

The weather was bad nearly all the time. When they camped out, the travellers were very often either soaked with rain or shivering from cold. If they made a fire, they would burn up on one side and freeze on the other. If it rained during the night, the tents offered little protection, and in the morning their clothes were ringing wet. On one occasion, the tents were pitched on rocks and there were many serpents.

But the courage of the nuns never faltered. It was with tears that they sang the praises of God but they sang them nevertheless. They had embraced the Cross out of love—until death, in the spirit of their Holy Rule.

On the shore of Lake Huron, Sister Lagrave slipped on a rock and sprained an ankle. The crippled Sister had to be carried to the canoe by two men. At Fort William, a new captain took over and he refused to take the crippled nun any further. It took a whole day to induce the captain to change his decision. Two strong Iroquois were hired to take charge of the suffering Sister.

On the 20th of June at night, great was the joy of the Sisters as they caught a glimpse in the distance in the light of a

brightly shining moon, the turrets of the St. Boniface Cathedral. It was of this cathedral that the poet John G. Whittier sweetly sang:

The voyageur smiles as he listens
To the sound that grows apace;
Well he knows the vesper ringing
Of the bells of St. Boniface

The bells of the Roman mission
That call from their turrets twain
To the boatman on the river
To the hunter on the plain



Finally, at one o'clock in the morning, the Sisters reached their destination, June 21, 1844. The Bishop had planned a gala reception, in keeping with the customs of the day. Everybody was to be lined up on the river bank. Cannons were to be fired, the church bells were to be rung. What a surprise for the Bishop when he was aroused in the middle of the night and told that the Sisters had arrived. The Bishop's reception plans had gone to pieces, it is true, but the nuns had arrived. So he together with Father J. Arsene Mayrand—the latter carrying a lantern, joyfully welcomed the daughters of Mother d'Youville.

Since that ever memorable day—June 21st, 1844—many other nuns representing many communities have arrived in the Canadian west and have done marvelous work. Still the fact remains that Sisters Valade, Lagrave, Coutlee (also known as Sister St. Joseph) and Lafrance were the pioneers. It was they who blazed the trail.

The first Sunday after their arrival, the Bishop had the four Grey Nuns solemnly enter the cathedral and then, with his heart overflowing with joy, presented them to his people. We may be sure that it was with the greatest of fervor that on that occasion, the hymn of thanksgiving of the church—the Te Deum—was sung.

Bishop Provencher had not provided a special house for the nuns because until then he was not certain of getting any nuns. So the daughters of Mother d'Youville were quartered in a house that the Bishop himself had abandoned because it was so badly constructed that the rain came through the roof and wind through the walls. "It is truly the stable of Bethlehem," wrote Sister

Valade, the Superior. But in the rude "stable of Bethlehem" they joyfully made their quarters. They were everlastingly thinking of Christ and it must have made them rejoice to have the chance of imitating Him in His poverty.

The nuns were called upon immediately to engage in every kind of activity. There was poultry to be looked after, cows to milk, gardening to be done. The water they used had to be carried from the river. There was sewing to be done, repairing of clothes, washing and the care of altar linen. To make their Grey Nuns' habits, they were forced to shear sheep, comb, the wool, spin it, weave it, and finally color it with a coffee and milk color. Then there were the religious exercises that were carried out with unfailing regularity.

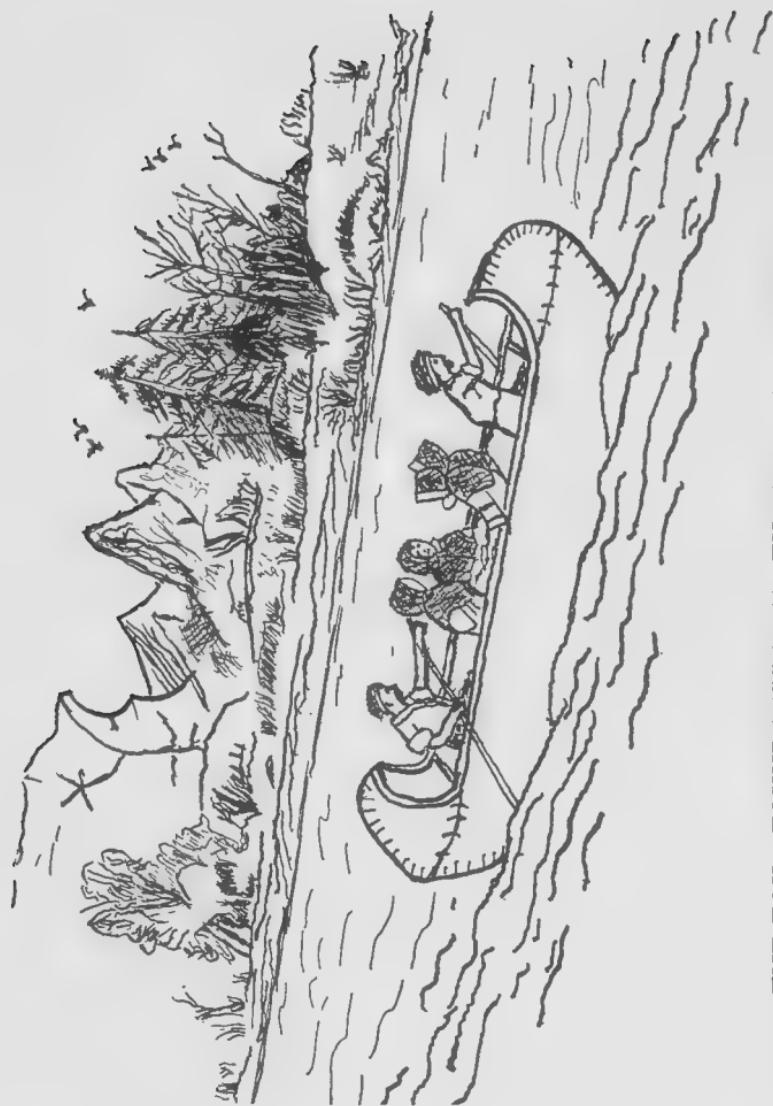
Pioneer Nurses of the West

On top of it all, there was the apostolate for the sake of which they left their Motherhouse in Montreal and came to the west. The first concern of the Sisters was teaching. But there was much nursing to be done. This was because there was so much sickness, one epidemic after another. The first epidemic after the arrival of the nuns was in 1846. They closed their school and ministered to the sick and dying throughout the land. A record states, in three weeks, Bishop Provencher buried 96 persons young and old. There were other widespread epidemics in 1854 and 1856. There were many cases of dysentery, measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever, influenza, billious fever, malarial fever, trembling fever.

There was still no hospital. In October, 1844, Sister Lagrave put aside her crutches and began to visit the sick in their homes, going in a Red River cart to those far out. In a report, it is stated that in ten years (1844-1854) the Sisters made 6,000 visits to the sick in their homes. They introduced health hygiene by teaching the natives to keep themselves and their homes clean. They made their patients comfortable. Poultices, ointments, remedies of every description were made from plants that grew in the district—wild mint, golden rod, blood root, pumpkin, wild strawberries, dandelions, and so on.

After many setbacks, the "General Hospital of St. Boniface" was opened in 1847. Like the Motherhouse in Montreal, it was

THE FOUR FOUNDRESSES ON THE WAY TO THE RED RIVER



always open to those in need—to the poor and the sick and the orphaned. The Nuns, it is to be kept in mind, at the time lived also in the "General Hospital of St. Boniface."

At the beginning of 1846, Bishop Provencher committed to the care of the Grey Nuns an old Assiniboine lady. That was the beginning at St. Boniface of the care of the aged, a work very dear to the hearts of the Grey Nuns. In 1848, a young Indian covered with hideous and infectious sores was admitted to the Grey Nuns' convent, there to receive care and attention. Sister Connolly also instructed the poor sufferer in the Catholic religion. He was baptized and soon afterwards his regenerated soul sped to its Creator.

Pioneer Teaching Nuns

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Grey Nuns, July 11, 1844, they opened a school, with Sister Lafrance in charge. They had at the beginning fifty-four pupils, mostly Santeux or Half-Breeds, and some Sioux. At St. Boniface, Sister Lagrave gave religious instruction outside the convent. All through the winter driving a little conveyance of her own, she went distances of several miles to teach catechism and prayers to grown-up men and women as well as children. All eagerly welcomed her and listened attentively to her instructions. She was also the nursing sister, as we have seen, in the neighborhood. The same Sister Lagrave organized a choir among the young people.

It is related in the chronicles of the Saint Boniface Grey Nuns that in the fall of 1844, Bishop Provencher told the nuns about his regret of having too few missionaries to extend the kingdom of God in the vast region. He had at the time only five priests to assist him in his immense task. The Bishop told the Grey Nuns that about nine miles from St. Boniface, a great number of children and of young people were growing up in ignorance of the truths necessary for salvation because there was no one to teach them. History adds that in December of that year, Sister Lagrave went to the place, now known as St. Norbert, and gave lessons there in Catechism twice a week, no matter what the temperature might be. About eighty men, women and children attended the classes. So successful were these classes that when Easter time came, the majority of the grown-up pupils had learned enough to satisfy the precepts of the Church. The Bishop, re-

joicing at her success, called Sister Lagrave his "good vicar."

For three consecutive winters, Sister Lagrave continued her work until the arrival of Rev. Father Jean-Marie Lestang, O.M.I. In 1858, Archbishop Tache himself accompanied Sisters Laurent and Dandurand to St. Norbert. A most enthusiastic welcome awaited them. Their first abode was a rude house covered with straw and earth. But they continued to teach and success went with them. A better structure was erected in 1878, and successive additions made the convent of St. Norbert as we see it today. Educational authorities of Manitoba were so well pleased with the results that they raised the institution to the rank of collegiate.

It is interesting here to note that the school inspector for the inspectorate in which St. Norbert is situated told a reporter for the Northwest Review, Winnipeg, in 1942, that he looked upon St. Norbert's collegiate as one of the best.

At St. Boniface, the boarding school established shortly after the arrival of the Grey Nuns kept on growing. It is impossible here to go into details. It is worthy of mention that during the years following the construction of the new brick building in 1883, the number of boarders often reached the hundred mark. Students came from all directions. There were some even from the United States. Senator Bernier, at the time superintendent of Catholic schools, stated that the best lay lady teachers of the Province were those trained at the Grey Nuns' boarding school. The Normal school, opened by the Government, through the agency of Archbishop Tache, for young Catholic ladies, was given over to the Grey Nuns and the Grey Nuns boarding school received the title of "Tache Academy." In 1890, when the school question was raised, the Grey Nuns normal school closed, but the boarding school continued until 1896. It then had more than 200 students. The following year the school was transferred to the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

In 1850, the half-breeds of St. Francis Xavier received two Grey Nuns, Sisters Lagrave and Lafrance who immediately opened a school in the locality. How successful the nuns were in training the half-breed is evident from testimony. In 1858, Mr. S. Dawson, a Catholic, who was head of a party of civil engineers sent by the Government of Upper Canada, visited the Sisters' school and wrote:

"The Grey Nuns have a large establishment just opposite to

the mouth of the Assiniboine, and another, a smaller one at the White Horse Plains (St. Francis Xavier). The ladies devoted themselves chiefly to the instruction of the children of mixed Canadian and Indian origin, and the effects of their zeal, piety and unfailing industry are manifest in the social improvement of the race, for whose benefit they are content to lead a life of toil and privation."

A year later, June 6th, 1859, a distinguished traveller, the Earl of Southesk, also a non-Catholic said in his journal:

"On Monday, a very agreeable hour was spent by Dr. Rae and myself in visiting the Roman Catholic nunnery, following an introduction to the Lady Superior afforded by Bishop Tache's kindness." Further on, he says in the same report: "The institution was universally spoken of as most useful and popular, being in all respects remarkably well conducted."

The wonderful reputation of the Grey Nuns school at St. Francis Xavier has continued to the present. In 1942, a school inspector told a reporter of the Northwest Review, Winnipeg: "I am continually amazed when I visit St. Francis. Each time I inspect the school I find that the Sister has made more and more progress. She is making Canadians of these children—Canadians in the real sense of the word!"

On September 20, 1860, the Grey Nuns took charge of the education of children at St. Vital, six miles from St. Boniface. The school was opened by Sisters Esperance and Connolly. For twenty-six years the nuns taught there until in 1886 adverse circumstances forced the closing of the school. In 1897, Archbishop Langevin, deplored the evil caused by neutral schools, asked the opening of a school opposite the old St. Vital. For twenty years afterwards nuns left every Sunday from St. Boniface returning Friday evening. Finally, in 1917 circumstances forced the giving up of the enterprise.

Ever since he had been consecrated, Bishop Tache walking in the footsteps of his predecessor, was a great friend of Catholic education. Schools flourished on the east side of the Red River and along the Assiniboine, but there were none for the Catholics on the Fort Garry side of the Red River. In 1869 the Bishop appointed two Grey Nuns, Sisters Saint Therese and McDougal to teach the young of what was soon to be the town of Winnipeg. In 1869, its population was less than a hundred; in 1874, it was

over five thousand. Thus a school was established, a school that was to become the St. Mary's Academy of today. The school was taken over in 1874 by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

In 1883 the Grey Nuns came to Ste Anne des Chenes. The first Sisters to arrive were Sisters Lapointe, O'Brien, Lagarde and Brouillet. The progress of the school they established was remarkable. In the course of twenty-five years two new annexes were added to the first convent. The number of day scholars and boarders passed the two hundred mark. Today, the convent is recognized by the Department of Education as a high school.

To take care of the Indian children, an industrial school for them was opened in July, 1889. In the beginning there were only five little Indian girls. In 1892 the number increased to thirty-five. Classes were given in the Provincial House. In 1891, a special building was erected for the Indian boys in a different part of the town. The little girls remained at the convent until 1897 when the two industrial schools were united to form one. But civilization took away the Indian encampments, and the number of Indian children becoming insufficient, it was deemed advisable to send them to the mission at Fort Alexander. The Industrial school closed in 1905 and shortly afterwards became the Juniorate of the Holy Family of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

From 1893 to 1895 the Grey Nuns conducted a school at St. Jean Baptiste. However, as the number of members of the Grey Nuns' community of St. Boniface was too small to answer all the demands made upon them they transferred the school to the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

In 1911, at the request of Father A. E. Giroux, parish priest of LaBroquerie, a school was established. The first nuns were Sisters Dupuis, Maurice and St. Joachim. Classes opened with an enrollment of fifty, increased to over one hundred and seventy in 1940.

The Story of Sister Teresa

Interesting indeed is the story of Sister Teresa. She became a Grey Nun at the age of sixteen. In 1855 she came to the Red River. Sister Lagrave's health was failing and so Sister Teresa took over the work of visiting the sick. She became extremely popular. Like Sister Lagrave, she was called the "Sister Doctor"

by the people. Old timers say that those Sisters did wonders, not only through their love and mercy and kindness, but also through their expert knowledge of herbs.

Sister Teresa had been "loaned for five years" by the Grey Nuns of Ottawa to the Red River Settlement. The Grey Nuns of Ottawa was a branch of the Grey Nuns established in 1845 by Reverend Mother E. Bruyere and three other Grey Nuns of Montreal. Sister Lagrave died in 1859 and the services of Sister Teresa were almost indispensable. So the superiors appealed to Ottawa for an extension of time. Permission was refused. Orders were orders, so Sister Teresa and her companion left with Bishop Grandin to wend their way to Pembina where they were to join a caravan going east. The water route had been abandoned after 1845.

But the half-breeds had different ideas. They appealed to the authorities to have Sister Teresa stay. But there was no use. Sister Teresa had orders to go and nothing could be done about it. Since the authorities could do nothing about it, the half-breeds decided to take matters into their own hands. The little party that was making its way to Pembina was surprised by a group of about fifteen horsemen, fifteen of the most important half-breeds of the settlement. Dismounting, they made a circle around Sister Teresa and kidnapped her. Sister Teresa could do nothing but surrender to a superior force. She was transferred to another Red River cart and brought back to the General Hospital of St. Boniface. Sister Teresa stayed. She died in St. Boniface, November 4, 1917.

Among other Sisters who covered themselves with glory fighting under the standard of the Cross at St. Boniface was Sister Laurent. Shortly after becoming a Grey Nun she came to St. Boniface where she lived and served seventy-six years. She died in 1925. She devoted most of her years to the sick and the poor, and achieved a great reputation. A story is told of a teacher who asked her young pupils what charity was. A little child stood up and said: "Sister Laurent is charity." This may have been going somewhat far, but the truth is that Sister Lourent was a true Sister of Charity and every true Sister of Charity personifies charity.

Then we could go on telling about other Sisters the lives of each and every one of which is a thrilling story in itself. Among those who up to 1861 served many years at St. Boniface we might mention Sisters Conolly (56 years in religion, died in 1904 at the

TRAVELLING IN THE EARLY DAYS



age of 76); Desautels (64 years in religion, died in 1932 at the age of 82); Fisette (66 years in religion, died in 1914 at the age of 83); Dussault, (66 years in religion, died in 1923 at the age of 88). There is a list of seventeen St. Boniface Grey Nuns who served fifty years or over in religion. More than forty served over twenty-five years.

Serving Christ's Poor

The care of the poor and the aged and the sick has from the very beginning constituted the most important work of the Grey Nuns. It was a work very dear to the heart of Mother d'Youville and likewise very dear to the hearts of her daughters. From their very arrival in St. Boniface, the Grey Nuns have lavished care and attention on those in need of help. At times it would be the poor, at times the sick or the infirm that were received and looked after until cured or until they passed away.

The Hospice Tache is also known as the Old Folks' Home. But it is more than an old folks' home. It is a home for the homeless, for incurables. Its history is as old as the history of the Grey Nuns of St. Boniface. Today, it stands, a large and beautiful building, a monument to the ideals of the Sisters of Charity of the General Hospital of Montreal. In it we find over four hundred inmates, men and women. In it we find men and women who are in a constant state of suffering. In it we find hopeless cases confined constantly to their beds. The sight of some of these cases is difficult to endure but the good Grey Nuns bestow upon them all the care and all the attention that they know and that their means will allow.

A physician calls at the Hospice every day. Sisters who are graduate nurses and other graduate nurses together with orderlies are on the staff and their first duty is to look after the sick. Special diets are provided for those in need of them.

As splendid as is the work of taking care of the inmates, it is not all that the Grey Nuns of the Hospice have accomplished. Following in the footsteps of Sister Lagrave and her companions, the Sisters have conducted a free Social Service, something that is hardly ever brought to light. The reason why it is so little known is that the Grey Nuns are not out to win the applause of men but to serve Christ in the person of His poor. Until a very few years ago Nuns visited the homes of the needy in St. Boniface. One of

the Nuns was exclusively occupied with this branch of Social Service, together with the washing and remodeling of old clothes that were given to the institution. Good veterans of Mother d'Youville's Army of Love were prodigal of their time and devotion in knitting stockings, sweaters and mitts and so on. Hundreds of pieces of clothing were distributed from the institution every year. In addition, a number of families daily received a supply of food and hot meals were served to many outsiders.

In 1941 however, as the work had developed considerably, it was decided to merge the Social Service of the Hospice with that of the Hospital so the Sister in charge was transferred there. At the Hospital the poor had already come in for a large share of attention. Now with the added Social Service from the Hospice we find thirty families coming for their evening meal. These were people whose income was insufficient **for** their needs but who were not on relief. An assortment of cans were prepared. These cans contained different kinds of food. Every afternoon, members of these families came to pick up the cans returning them empty the next day. Then there was the sewing room. Several days a week, different ladies of St. Boniface gathered in the sewing room to sew for the poor. They made layettes, dresses, boys' suits, wind-breakers. Besides this much of the sewing for the poor was done by the Nuns themselves. With the passage of time however, the parish activities became more and more organized, so that in 1943, under the direction of their devoted pastor, the ladies of the parish were entrusted with this branch of Social Service thus ensuring the continuance of this great work of charity carried on so zealously for well nigh a century by the devoted Grey Nuns.

Then there is the out-patient department of the Hospital. Throughout its history, St. Boniface Hospital has taken care of sick poor. Today, hundreds of families who simply cannot meet the cost of medical attention are taken care of by the Out Patient Department. It was organized as a separate department in 1924. It was located in the south wing of the main building on the ground floor. The long corridor is well remembered by thousands of people who sought relief for their various ailments at the "O.P.D." and there received treatment. In January, 1939, a new building costing about \$145,000 was opened for the Out Patient Department.

Outside of the ten thousand dollars contributed by the Manitoba Government for the maintenance of the venereal clinic, the

new out patient department is virtually without financial income. Knowingly and willingly the Grey Nuns created a perpetual deficit. But the deficit will be far outbalanced by the satisfaction that the Sisters of Charity of St. Boniface will find in loyalty to the glorious ideals of a truly wonderful Mother, the Venerable Servant of God, Marie-Marguerite d'Youville.

The Romance of the Hospitals

As we have seen, in 1847, the "General Hospital of St. Boniface" was established. But the nuns were lodged in the same building as the sick. In addition to taking care of the sick in their own home, they visited the sick at home. The nuns were kept busy. In the year 1870, it is recorded that the Grey Nuns vaccinated 3,232 persons. Epidemics caused terrible hardships and sorrow. One old timer told a Grey Nun that she had four little brothers and that they all died in one week with black diphtheria. Her father had to dig their graves and bury them.

In 1870, the Red River settlement passed out of the control of the Hudson's Bay Company and became a province of the Dominion of Canada, receiving the name of Manitoba. As the population steadily increased, the number of those needing medical attention also steadily increased. At St. Boniface, the need of a separate building for the sick became evident. So a special building was erected in 1871 accommodating four patients. That is not the beginning of St. Boniface Hospital as far as its work is concerned—the beginning goes back to 1844 when Sister Lagrave started to take care of the sick. St. Boniface Hospital as we see it today together with the Hospice Tache, the Sanatorium at St. Vital, the Grey Nuns' Hospital at Regina and other institutions of a like nature are the crown jewels of the St. Boniface Grey Nuns.

The special building built in 1871, has grown and developed into one of the finest institutions of its kind on the continent. It was erected twenty-seven years after Florence Nightingale determined to devote her life to nursing; four years after Lord Lister formulated his famous modern surgical technique that prevented infections; twenty-four years before the discovery of the X-Ray; seven years before the first railway came to the settlement.

In 1877, the four-bed hospital was increased to one of ten beds. In 1887, there was constructed the first part of the build-

ing as we know it today with a capacity of sixty beds. A newspaperman of 1887 describes it "not only spacious and modern but even elegant." He should have seen the magnificent and majestic St. Boniface Hospital of the present time.

In 1893, the transverse wing was built giving a total bed capacity of 125, two operating rooms and a sterilizing room. In 1894 came the first resident intern. In 1897 the training school for nurses was established. In 1905, the large south wing was added, bringing the bed capacity to 350. The next year came another extension. In 1914, the central wing was taken down and the massive structure of six stories replaced it. In 1926, a separate



LEARNING TO TEND THE SICK

building for interns was opened. In 1928, the nurses moved into their own new and beautiful home, releasing many beds for patients in the Hospital. In 1939, as already noted, the new building for the out patient department was formally opened. The result of the steady progress and development is that St. Boniface Hospital today has over 550 beds. It is staffed by fifty Sisters,

forty graduate nurses, twenty-five interns, and a large number of professional and non-professional technicians and helpers. There are three thousand meals served daily from the main kitchen. Over four hundred young doctors have made their internship in the Hospital. Since 1897, St. Boniface Hospital Nursing School has trained over two thousand of the finest nurses in the world.

St. Boniface Hospital has a magnificent record of service. It is worthy of note that when the deadly Spanish influenza was raging in 1918, 1,375 persons stricken with the disease were received into the institution within a few weeks. Of these, 250 died. At the risk of their lives, the good Nuns and other members of the staff of St. Boniface Hospital took the greatest possible care of those of their patients who were stricken with this, the most deadly contagious disease of our times.

That in brief is the magnificent record of a truly magnificent institution—St. Boniface Hospital. But it is by no means the end of the romance of the hospitals as far as the Grey Nuns of St. Boniface are concerned. The members of Mother d'Youville Legion of Mercy everywhere are ever searching for new ways and means of going to the help of those that suffer. And so it has been at St. Boniface. From the Provincial House have gone Grey Nuns to erect other institutions, institutions that stand as monuments, monuments to an ideal, the ideal of heroic charity and unselfish service.

Not far from St. Boniface—at St. Vital, on beautiful and spacious grounds along the Red River, stands the stately and majestic St. Boniface Sanatorium. No trip to Winnipeg and surrounding district is complete without going to see this truly wonderful institution. It was opened in 1930 and has a bed capacity of 285 for the treatment of tuberculous patients. Every means that modern genius has been able to invent is being made use of to bring comfort to the patients and to speed their recovery. Inside is to be found a beautiful and spacious chapel. Inside too is to be found the best and most modern equipment for the diagnosis and treatment of every phase of tuberculosis. First class operating rooms with every modern appliance have been installed including the latest X-Ray equipment. Found too at the Sanatorium is provision for useful occupation and recreation. Truly, as a writer expressed it in the Northwest Review, Winnipeg, in 1939: "Language is wholly inadequate to describe the meaning of this great God-send to the people of Western Canada."

Going further away, in the city of Regina, we find another majestic institution devoted to the care of the sick—the Regina Grey Nuns' Hospital. It is in charge of the Grey Nuns of St. Boniface Province. It was in the year 1907 that, in answer to an urgent appeal from the clergy and laity of Regina that the Grey Nuns decided to found a Catholic Mission Hospital there. As in St. Boniface, the Hospital, from modest beginnings grew and developed into one of the best equipped and most up-to-date hospitals in the West.

In February, 1907, the first three Grey Nuns arrived at Regina to take charge of the new enterprise—Mother M. Duffin, Sisters St. Cyr and Wagner. For several weeks the three Nuns lived in an old rectory which previously had been a boarding house. On June 13, 1907, they purchased the Park Sanatorium situated in the 14th block on Angus Street. This institution had been opened as a hospital in February, 1907 by Doctors Johnson and Callum. The Nuns took possession of the Hospital on June 26th, 1907. At the start, they had only five patients. As in the case of Mother d'Youville, those Nuns were misunderstood and even misrepresented. Quite a number of citizens of Regina and even some doctors did not want the Nuns. Those devoted daughters of Mother d'Youville were called upon to walk along the way of the Cross but there were consolations too. The Sisters of Charity found many friends. Success crowned the patient and persevering efforts of the Grey Nuns.

In 1912, the construction of a new \$100,000 building was completed. A School of Nursing was opened immediately after the Hospital was founded. The first class graduated in 1909. The year 1915 saw the completion of the first separate residence for nurses. As time went on, the nurses' residence was enlarged and the hospital expanded. During the years of depression the Regina Grey Nuns' Hospital suffered a severe test because of the want of support from doctors or because of having too few patients or because of failure to receive remuneration for services rendered. But the good Grey Nuns, brave soldiers of the Cross as they were, remained steadfastly at their post. Then followed speedy growth. Today, the Hospital has a capacity of 400 beds. There are so many applications for admission to the Nursing School that the Nuns are in a position to make careful choice.

The Grey Nuns of Regina stepped forward to take a leading

part in Saskatchewan's fight against one of mankind's most deadly foes—cancer. On November 17, 1939, the same year that the new \$145,000 out patient department was opened at St. Boniface, the new \$150,000 forty-bed cancer clinic, a wing of the Grey Nuns' Hospital was officially opened by Premier Patterson of Saskatchewan. On the occasion distinguished persons spoke in terms of highest praise of the Sisters of Charity, the Grey Nuns.

Nor is that the end of the story of the Hospitals. Scattered over the Canadian west we find Grey Nuns' hospitals all worthy of mention, all having behind them a most interesting and impressive story. Among these hospitals we find: Holy Cross Hospital, Calgary; St. Paul's Hospital, Saskatoon; General Hospital, Edmonton; St. Teresa's Hospital, St. Paul, Alberta; St. Joseph's Hospital, Gravelbourg; Mission Hospital, Ile a la Crosse; Mission Hospital, Berens River, Manitoba; St. Rose Hospital, St. Rose du Lac, Manitoba; LaVerendrye Hospital, Fort Francis, Ontario; General Hospital, Aklavik; General Hospital, Fort Smith; St. Margaret's Hospital, Fort Simpson; Faraud Hospital, Fort Rae. Only a few of these are in charge of the Grey Nuns of the St. Boniface Province, yet all are in charge of Mother d'Youville's daughters and the fact still stands that it was from St. Boniface that the glorious march of the Grey Nuns westward and northward began.

Romance of the Indian Schools

Most interesting is the romance of the Indian schools in charge of the Grey Nuns of the religious province of St. Boniface. The story goes back to 1858. The opening scene is laid in the United States. The advance of civilization had become such that the Government decided to restrict the limits of the territory of the Indians. In order to pacify the bronze skinned inhabitants of the plains for the loss of their hunting grounds the Government made attractive treaties with them only to violate those treaties almost immediately. The result was a flare-up of temper on the part of the Sioux, civil war, atrocities, massacres. The final result was that they were overcome by superior armed forces—some were hanged, others were made prisoners and the rest pardoned on the condition that they would be confined to reserves and guarded by American authorities. Major J. Forbes was made Government agent.

Major Forbes was a man eminently qualified for the very responsible post assigned to him. He made use of every means in his power to bring about the material and spiritual progress of those committed to his charge. He saw at once that the great need of the Indians was religion in order to bring about the much wanted change in their mentality. At the same time he saw the great need of missionary nuns. He made up his mind to get these nuns.

He made known his plans to the Indians. Those Indians remembered—they remembered seeing nuns further north. Accordingly four Indians went with the agent to explain their wish to Archbishop Grace of St. Paul, Minnesota. The good archbishop listened most sympathetically to what the delegation had to say and enthusiastically approved their plans.

After in vain seeking nuns in the United States, Major Forbes thought of Canada and of the Grey Nuns. In Montreal, he told his story to the Reverend Mother General: "There are abandoned souls to be saved. Nobody wants to go to them." It was the story of the Red River settlement all over again—if no one wanted to go, the Grey Nuns would go.

And the Grey Nuns went. It was decided that four nuns from St. Boniface should go—Sisters Clapin, Lajemmerais, Allard and Drapeau. Bishop Bourget of Montreal who had encouraged the establishment of the new foundation in the Indian territory of the United States sent a chaplain—Father L. Bonin. The party left St. Boniface September 24, 1874 and after a dangerous journey, arrived at Fort Totten (St. Michael's), North Dakota, November 4th, the same year. Their "convent" was in a most deplorable condition. For weeks they had only a floor for a bed.

Such was the beginning of the St. Michael's Indian school in North Dakota (diocese of Fargo) today. Together with their good chaplain, Father Bonin, they fought like good soldiers against the superstitions and deranged morality of the Indians. After four years of zealous apostolic labor, Father Bonin was forced on account of his health to withdraw and then came the Benedictine Fathers of St. Meinrad's Abbey, Indiana, to work side by side with the daughters of Mother d'Youville.

For years the Grey Nuns were the only nurses on the reservation. There were devastating epidemics—of small pox, scarlet fever, whooping-cough. At least once an Indian made an attempt to kill one of the nuns—Sister Drapeau. But the good nuns like

the valiant Benedictines remained at their posts. The result is that today the Sioux reserve of North Dakota at Totten (St. Michael's), is justly regarded as one of the most Catholic reserves to be found anywhere.

In Saskatchewan, the foundation of the Industrial School for Indians at Lebret was the realization of a great dream—the dream of the illustrious and saintly Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin, O.M.I. (died in 1871) and of his famous co-worker, Father Albert Lacombe, O.M.I. It was their dream to establish Indian schools under the direction of Missionary Fathers and Brothers aided by missionary nuns with the support of the Government. Bishop Grandin and Father Lacombe did not live long enough to see their dream realized. It was left to Archbishop Taché of St. Boniface to bring about the realization of the dream of his brother Oblates. In 1883, he went to Ottawa and succeeded in obtaining the consent of the government and sufficient appropriation for three Indian schools in the West. The first the Archbishop decided to place in the picturesque Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan. The result was that a school was constructed there in 1884. On October 23 of the same year, four Grey Nuns arrived: Sisters Genevieve, Bergeron and St. Arnaud. Such was the start of the present Indian school at Lebret.

It took a struggle for the Missionary Fathers and Nuns to overcome the fears that the Indians had of the whites, but overcome those fears they did. The number of Indian boys and girls attending the school constantly increased until in 1893 it reached 225. Several times the destructive forces of nature leveled the school to the ground, in 1904, in 1926 and in 1932. These were terrible blows but the Oblate Fathers and the Grey Nuns continued the good fight, the Government came to their aid and the Indian school at Lebret continues to flourish rendering outstanding service to the Church, to the nation and to the Indians.

On the banks of Rainy River, three miles from Fort Frances, Ontario, is to be found the "Cochiching" reserve of Saulteaux Indians. It is a beautiful and historic spot. It was there in 1844 that the canoes of the Grey Nuns touched the banks of Rainy River—at the exact spot where in 1793, Sieur de La Verendrye, uncle of Mother d'Youville on her mother side, built Fort St. Pierre. It was in that region that Father Allard, O.M.I., established a Catholic mission and built a church in 1883. It was

there that the Grey Nuns went in 1906 to support missionary endeavor on a spot that brings back memories of the great Canadian heroes, La Verendrye and De La Jemmerais and the illustrious heroine of charity, Mother d'Youville.

Thus was founded St. Margaret's boarding school for Indians. Reverend Father Brassard, O.M.I., was in charge of the mission. In less than a month after the arrival of the Grey Nuns, they had thirty-two Sauteux children under their charge. The hardships to be endured by the Nuns were great but their efforts were crowned with success. The neighboring pagan Indians carefully watched the good Nuns and were so impressed by the example of Mother d'Youville's daughters that they sent more and more children to St. Margaret's. Thus did the institution on the historic site on the banks of Rainy River continue to prosper. The result of the combined efforts of the Father Missionaries and the Grey Nuns is that the Sauteux reserve at St. Frances is decidedly civilized and Catholic.

Soldiers of the Cross Indeed

The story of the Grey Nuns of St. Boniface is far from complete. It is absolutely impossible fully to deal with it in a work of this size. The number of Grey Nuns of St. Boniface continues to grow and their activities continue to expand. Like the Grey Nuns everywhere they are seeking new fields and new means of putting into practice the noble ideals of their noble family.

"O Crux, Ave, Spes Unica! — Hail O Cross, thou solitary Hope!" It is with these words that the Grey Nun salutes several times a day the beautiful cross that she wears on her bosom. "**In hoc signo vinces—In this sign thou shalt conquer!**" This is the watchword of Mother d'Youville's valiant daughters. Soldiers of the Cross the Grey Nuns are, by virtue not only of the solemn pledges made at Baptism but also by virtue of the solemn promises they made on the day of their profession. It was through the Cross and its lessons of self-sacrifice that Mother d'Youville and her daughters were enabled to win victory after victory over trials and difficulties that might have tested the courage and gallantry of even the bravest and strongest soldiers. It was upon the Cross as upon the strongest possible foundation that Mother d'Youville built her marvelous organization. Throughout the history of the Grey Nuns it was the spirit of the Cross that gave



PROVINCIAL HOUSE, ST. BONIFACE

them courage and strength and consolation.

It was the spirit of the Cross that gave the Grey Nuns of the Red River valley strength when adversity came. On April 27, 1852, a sudden flood struck terror into their hearts. For several days the waters kept rising, reaching a depth of fourteen to fifteen feet. The inhabitants of the settlement speedily left their homes because of the fury of the flood which swept away all sorts of constructions and even solid houses. The chapel of the Grey Nuns was flooded, and Mass was read in the gallery. In addition there was a strong wind that shook the whole house and during the night of May 12-13, water and wind combined to tear it down.

In 1861 St. Boniface was again flooded and it was at this time, May 13, that Sister Valade, the first Superior, died. When the day of the funeral came, Archbishop Tache, and his assistants had to walk and stand in water knee-deep. Truly, as Father Duchaussois, O.M.I., writes in his book, "The Grey Nuns in the Far North": "Surely we may say that the St. Boniface Convent bore sufficient mark of the Cross."

If the Grey Nuns' convent at St. Boniface bore the mark of the Cross, the Grey Nuns who labored in the Canadian Northwest were true to the spirit of the Cross. When Bishop Tache in 1858 was seeking Grey Nuns for more distant missions in the Canadian Northwest, he felt it his duty to tell the Mother General at Montreal: "Sometimes the Fathers themselves have not enough to eat." "Well," said the Reverend Mother General, "in that case our Sisters will also fast, and will pray God to come to the help of both communities." The Sisters did fast often and gladly for the love of Christ Crucified, and for the love of those so dear to His Sacred Heart—those who suffer. At the risk of their lives, enduring indescribable hardships, the Grey Nuns continued their march westward and northward founding institution after institution until in 1867, they are found at Fort Providence, thousands of miles from their Motherhouse in Montreal. The story of these institutions is the story of a glorious triumph of the Cross achieved through the heroic efforts of gallant pioneers of the Cross, missionary Fathers and Brothers, aided by their loyal helpers, the Sisters of Charity.

To those good Sisters of Charity Canada owes a debt of undying gratitude. They are the exemplification of the good, the beautiful and the true. They are loyal citizens and devoted patriots. They have helped to build this Canada of ours into one of

the grandest nations of the world. It is we who are garnering the fruits of their privations, their heartaches, their tears, their labors. Surely we should try to show our gratitude. There will be celebrations to mark the hundredth anniversary of the coming of those brave Grey Nuns to St. Boniface, but celebrations are not enough. We must try to learn the lessons that they have so beautifully taught by word and example. Then surely we want to share in their glorious work; surely we want to help them. We can do no better than to join them in their apostolate of prayer and sacrifice. The Grey Nuns are grateful to Almighty God for the favors showered down upon their lovely family in the west during these hundred years and they want us to join with them in the their hymn of joyous thanksgiving.

Then, there is the desire that burns within the heart of every daughter of Mother d'Youville. That desire is that the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus will soon bring about the beatification of that glorious and illustrious Foundress of theirs who was declared to be the Venerable Servant of God by Pope Leo XIII, March 27, 1890. The image of the Sacred Heart is superimposed on the Cross the Grey Nun wears on her breast. May we together with the members of that illustrious battalion of love and mercy join in a fervent, heartfelt appeal that the "Burning Furnace of Charity" may speed the coming of the day when the whole Catholic world will hail Canada's courageous soldier of the Cross and friend of the poor—Mother d'Youville as "Saint Marie-Marguerite of Canada."



"In this sign they conquered."



FIRST ST. BONIFACE HOSPITAL

